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BACKGROUND PAPER 1

A HISTORY OF IMMIGRATION POLICY IN CANADA

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INTRODUCTION

Canada is a country of immigrants. Between the 1851 and 1996 censuses, over 14.5 million people moved to Canada in search of opportunities and a fresh start in the "new" world. Indeed, much of Canada's current standard of living and our international reputation as a prosperous developed nation can be attributed to immigration. Yet despite the clear contribution that immigration has had on the development of Canada and its history, the immigration "question" remains a contentious issue for many across the country. Whether it is concerns over the ability of the Canadian economy to absorb and accommodate newcomers or concerns over the impact on Canadian cultural identity, immigration remains one of the country's most perennial concerns.

The purpose of this report is to briefly review Canada's immigration experience, summarize the essentials of past and present immigration policy, and then assess that policy in light of future challenges. This paper does not represent a new effort at scholarly investigation into the immigration issue, but rather is intended to serve as a synthesis of existing work already conducted in this policy area. (A full bibliography of sources used for this report is included on page 16.)

IMMIGRATION: Broad Themes

The objectives of Canadian immigration policy and the regulations governing the implementation of those policies have fluctuated over time. Yet, it is also clear that seven broad themes run through the history of Canada's immigration experience:

1) **The story of immigration in Canada is not one of orderly population growth.** Immigration has been marked by huge swings as governments have sought to fulfill particular objectives in differing economic, political, and social circumstances *(Troper, 1985)*. The effect of this approach to immigration is clearly illustrated in ***Figure 1 (page 2)*** which shows both the huge spikes and large dips occurring in immigration levels from 1852 to 1998. The swings are in large part due to one of the most noticeable features of Canadian immigration policy: the "tap-on-tap-off" approach. Throughout Canada's history, the borders were either opened or closed depending on the perceived needs of the country and prevailing social, political, and international circumstances. Thus, there are several immigration "eras" that can serve as an outline for a discussion of immigration policy, whether it is the settlement of the Canadian West, the sharp drop in immigration at the onset of the Depression and WWII, or the subsequent recovery of the 1950s. (A discussion of these eras begins on page 7.)

This conference background report was prepared by Casey Vander Ploeg, Director of Governance Studies at the Canada West Foundation, for the Organizing Committee of Pioneers 2000, a national conference on immigration. Because of the independence given the author in preparing this report, the opinions and recommendations expressed within are those of the author only, and do not necessarily reflect the opinions of the conference Organizing Committee, the hosting organizations and their members and donors, or the sponsors of the conference. *Permission is hereby given by the copyright owner for any and all reproduction of this document in its entirety for educational and non-profit purposes.*

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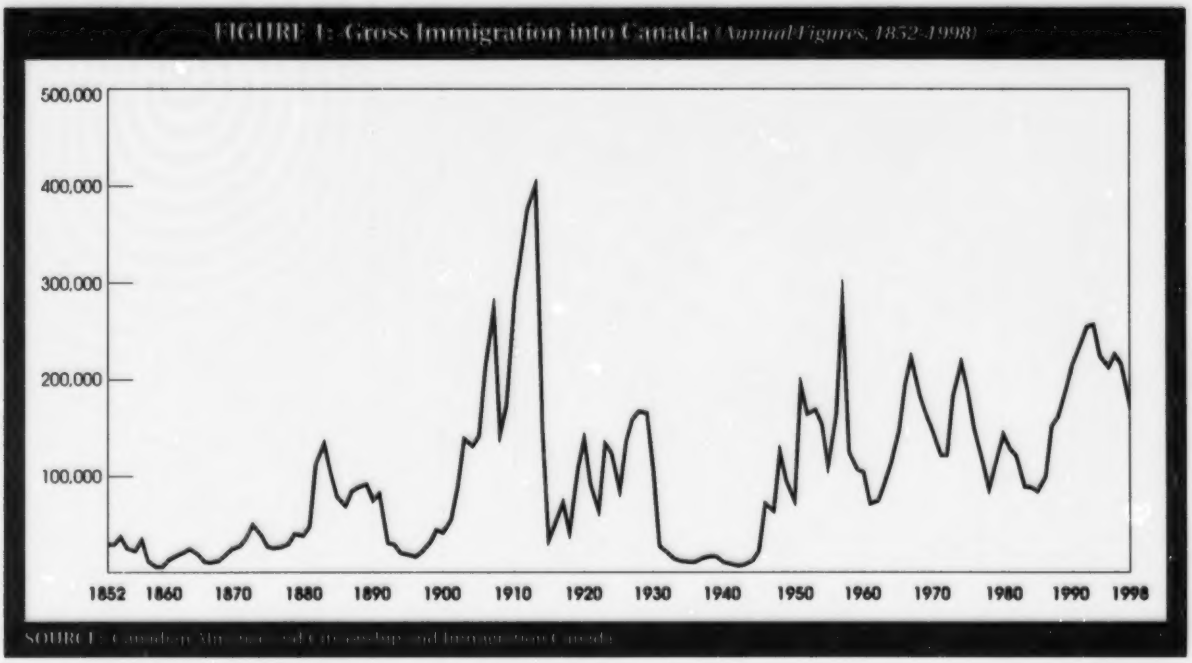


FIGURE 1: Gross Immigration into Canada *(Annual Figures, 1852-1998)*

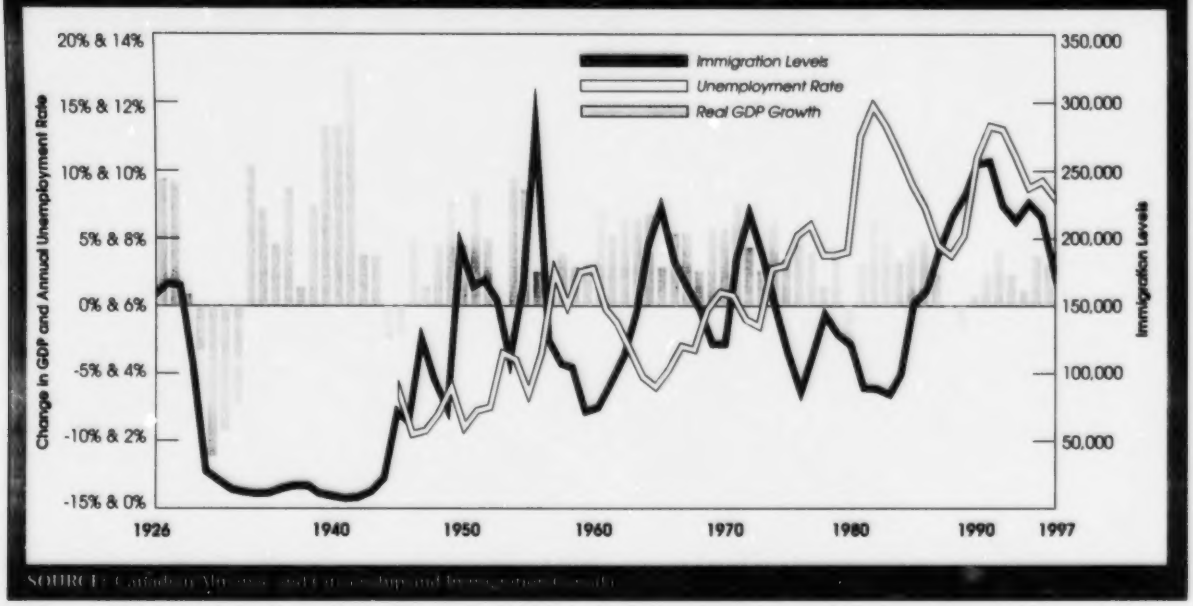
SOURCE: Canadian Almanac and Directory and Immigration Canada

2) Historically, Canada's immigration policy has been very closely linked to the requirements of the economy, particularly the needs of the labour force. To be sure, a number of factors converge to impact on immigration policy, including foreign policy, interest group lobbying, constitutional and bureaucratic pressures, the demographic realities as understood by government, and the perceived capacity of the country to absorb immigrants *(Troper, 1997 and Dirks, 1995)*. But regardless of the importance of these factors, it is widely recognized that Canada has consistently required imported labour – both skilled and unskilled – to assist in economic development *(Avery, 1985)*. Indeed, for much of our history, the key component of Canada's labour market strategy was immigration policy *(Tuohy 1992)*. Economic determinants, more than any other consideration, are thought to have shaped both the nature and direction of Canadian immigration policy over the last century. While this is only one consideration, it is arguably the most important one *(Dirks, 1995)*.

The close link between immigration and the Canadian economy is shown in ***Figure 2 (page 3)*** by comparing immigration levels to two key economic indicators – annual GDP growth (adjusted for inflation) and annual Canada-wide unemployment rates. It is evident from the graphic that for most of Canada's history, immigration levels tend to follow the path set by the national economy. In the Great Depression, for example, real GDP growth plummeted from a 10% growth rate in 1927 to a 12% decline by 1930. As a result, immigration levels also fell from a pre-Depression high of 165,000 in 1929 to 11,000 in 1935 as the Canadian government slammed the immigration door shut. In more recent years, readers can note the direct correlation between immigration levels and the rate of unemployment in the country. As the unemployment rate falls, immigration increases in the following years; as unemployment rises, immigration tapers off. It is only recently that a significant exception to this historical pattern has shown itself. With the onset of the 1990 recession, government-enforced immigration levels were much slower to respond to an increase in unemployment. It was only when the unemployment rate began to fall in the subsequent recovery that immigration levels declined.

3) While immigration is a key consideration in Canada's history, it has always been a highly contentious issue area, and clearly remains so. The political environment, the health of the economy, and the prevailing social climate, coupled with concerns over ethnicity, can certainly impact whether immigration is favoured or deplored *(Dirks, 1995)*. In general, however, the most powerful argument against immigration has always been that "immigrants take jobs held by Canadians." The argument is simple –

FIGURE 2: Immigration, Real GDP Growth, and the Unemployment Rate



SOURCE:

at any one time the absolute number of jobs is fixed, and if immigrants occupy more of them, there will be fewer jobs available for everybody else *(Simon, 1992)*. This job "displacement" it is argued, causes increased unemployment, and the increased supply of labour reduces the prevailing wage *(Globerman, 1992)*. Others add that immigrants "take out" more than they "put in" and thereby burden taxpayers by drawing on social programs. Additional concerns have centered around urban over-crowding and the issue of increased social friction between Canadians and the imported cultures of immigrants *(Globerman, 1992)*.

At the same time, the pro-immigration case argues that there are real benefits to enlarging the population through aggressive immigration. Highly skilled immigrants can improve the base of technological skills in the country and through the increased diversity they bring, stimulate new services, experimentation, creativity, specialization, and innovation *(Globerman, 1992)*. Much has been written assessing the economic benefits provided by increased immigration ***(see Box 1, page 4)*** and while a complete survey is outside the scope of this paper, it is safe to say that many of the prevailing economic objections against immigration have largely been disproven in the past decade. Immigrants tend to pay more in taxes than the cost of the social services and schooling they consume. Immigrants do not necessarily cause job displacement, and they can actually raise productivity and make their new home country more competitive internationally *(Simon, 1992)*. While both sides in the debate make economic arguments to bolster their case, the misconceptions about the economic costs and benefits of immigration continue *(DeVoretz, 1995)*. In large part, the variation in opinion on the issue is caused by different perceptions about the facts *(Walker, 1992)*. This situation has been exacerbated by the reluctance of government to encourage meaningful debate on such a divisive issue, making any consensus difficult, if not impossible, to achieve *(Dirks, 1995)*. The strange irony is that while barriers across the world have been eased through free trade agreements allowing easier passage of capital and goods and services, barriers have been universally strengthened against the passage of persons *(Head, 2000)*.

4) There has always been a perennial debate over the numbers of immigrants Canada should allow, but the issue of what "type" of immigrant has been no less important. By controlling the number and the selection of immigrants, the government has sought to fulfill a variety of objectives, and obviously, these have shifted over time *(Dirks, 1985)*. In the 1880s, for example, the government sought workers to assist with the grinding

task of building a transcontinental railway. In the early 1900s, the focus shifted to courting experienced farmers with sufficient capital to settle the West. In the 1950s, the focus shifted again to skilled technicians and other labourers to help build a modern economy.

While the issue of the most "desirable" immigrant has always been a key consideration for immigration policy, the concerns today are not the same as they were one hundred years ago. Until the end of the Second World War, this issue was closely related to the current prejudices concerning ethnicity and race. There were "preferred" immigrants (Britains, Americans of English stock, and Northern and Western Europeans), "acceptable" immigrants or "foreigners" (Southern and Eastern Europeans), and those who were deemed "undesirable" (African-Americans, Chinese, and other Asians), who were tolerated only for accepting the difficult and back-breaking labour that other Canadians would reject *(Avery, 1985)*. While Canadian immigration policy has formally eschewed the racial and discriminatory overtones of the past, the debate over "preferred" immigrants continues, but in a new direction.

Today, much of the debate over immigration policy centres around finding the right balance between the three "classes" of immigrants (refugees, family reunification applicants, and "independents" who are admitted based on education levels, age, occupation, and a host of other factors that impact on their ability to contribute to Canada economically). Balancing Canada's humanitarian responsibilities by admitting refugees and reuniting families (regardless of economic potential) with Canada's need for immigrants who are most able to accommodate and adapt to their new home, participate actively in society, and contribute meaningfully to the economic, social, and political development of the country, is no small task.

The issue continues to generate considerable discussion. Recent shifts in the ***sources*** of Canadian immigrants (more now come from developing countries) as well as the ***type*** of immigrants (family reunification applicants have had priority since the early 1980s) has led some to argue that immigration to Canada is

BOX 1: The Economics of Immigration

Many recent studies have examined the economic impacts of immigration and the economic potential of immigrants. Some of the key findings include:

- *In the short term, job displacement does occur in some sub-sectors of the economy, but the effects are not wide-spread and tend to be short term (DeVoretz, 1992.)*
- *Immigrants do not tend to use more government transfer payments and public services than naturalized citizens (Simon, 1992). A recent study in British Columbia found that in 1990, only 2.7% of the provincial social service caseload was foreign-born, while such residents comprised 22% of the population (Akbari, 1995).*
- *Canadians may actually benefit from a windfall generated by immigrants. Younger immigrants expand the tax base and help offset the increasing social costs of an aging population. There is a one-time benefit to citizens because immigrants are not typically accompanied by elderly parents. Thus, increased immigration may be a relatively painless way to ease the difficult trade-off between social benefits and the high taxes that accompany them (Simon, 1992).*
- *Within three to five years, immigrant family earnings reach and pass those of the average family due to the favourable age composition of immigrant families (Simon, 1992).*
- *Immigrants are both workers and consumers. While they do occupy jobs, immigrants also enlarge consumer demand (Grubel, 1992). This leads to an increase in employment. Even if the short term job market is fixed, immigrants will consume before they go to work, and may even decrease unemployment in the short-term (Simon, 1992).*
- *Immigrants are also more likely than non-immigrants to establish new businesses, and therefore create jobs directly (Simon, 1992).*
- *As a source of economic wealth, natural resources have become less important with each passing decade. The crucial capital required by today's new economy is human capital: skills and knowledge. Immigrants bring this human capital with them (Simon, 1992).*
- *Clearly, some immigrants come to Canada already well-educated. As such, the receiving country does not have to invest in their formal training but can reap an immediate benefit from their various talents and abilities (Beaujot, 1992).*

providing increasingly fewer and fewer economic returns *(DeVoretz, 1995)*. As such, many Canadians are now calling for a new direction in immigration policy, one that focuses more on immigrants' potential to contribute to Canada.

5) Despite Canada's reputation as a country built by immigration, this has not always been a natural process, and Canada has often had to compete vigorously for immigrants: The popular perception is that Canada is the economic and social envy of the world. While Canadians can certainly look back with pride on past accomplishments, as far as immigration is concerned, Canada is not, nor has it ever been, the only "game in town." While Canada and Australia join with the United States to form the three great immigrant-receiving countries of the world, Canada has always seemed to be more a land of second choice than a land of second chance *(Troper, 1997)*. For those looking to migrate, the United States has been the prime target. While the United States seems to passively draw immigrants to its borders, Canada and others have had to work hard to court immigrants. History shows that once in Canada, many immigrants would often turn south, taking a path cut by earlier cohorts *(Troper, 1997)*.

Figure 3 compares immigration, emigration, and the net balance for each decade from 1851 to 1996. At several times in Canada's history, emigration has far outpaced immigration. In the forty years prior to 1900, Canada saw more people leave than enter. While 1.9 million people immigrated between 1851 and 1901, 2.2 million left over the same time period. From 1901 to 1931, the period when Canada saw its greatest influx of immigrants to settle in the West, 4.1 million immigrants came while 2.8 million Canadians left. From 1911 to 1921, the single largest immigration decade in Canadian history, almost 1.1 million left Canada. Thus, it is only since the 1950s that there has been a steady and prolonged net immigration into Canada *(Economic Council, 1991)*. At the same time, emigration has by no means stopped. In every decade since 1950, between 400,000 and 900,000 Canadians have left the country.

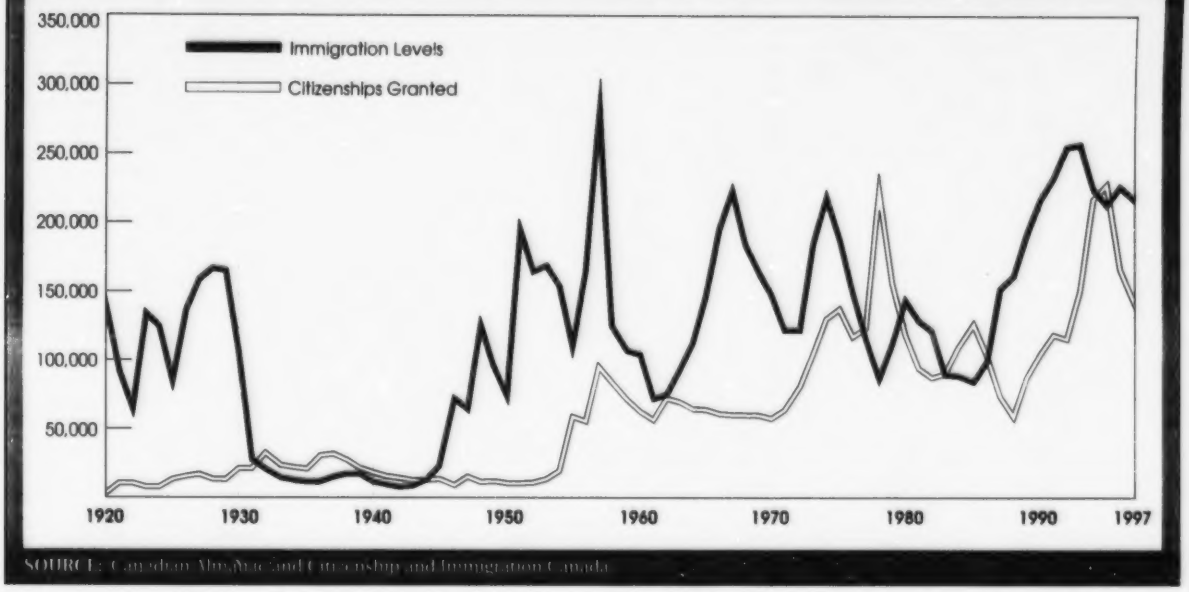
The interplay between the forces of immigration and emigration are highlighted further by ***Figure 4 (page 6)*** which shows the numbers of immigrants and the number of Canadian citizenships granted since 1920. It is clear that many immigrants fail to take up Canadian citizenship and are content to stay as landed immigrants, to return home, or use Canada as a way-stop as they work their way to other pastures.

FIGURE 3: Immigration, Emigration, and Net Migration into Canada *(By Decade, 1851-1996)*

Decade	Population at Start of Decade	Immigration	Emigration	Net Immigration	Population Increase
1851-1861	2,436,000	352,000	170,000	182,000	793,000
1861-1871	3,230,000	260,000	410,000	-150,000	460,000
1871-1881	3,689,000	350,000	404,000	-54,000	636,000
1881-1891	4,325,000	680,000	826,000	-146,000	508,000
1891-1901	4,833,000	250,000	380,000	-130,000	538,000
1901-1911	5,371,000	1,550,000	740,000	810,000	1,835,000
1911-1921	7,207,000	1,400,000	1,089,000	311,000	1,581,000
1921-1931	8,788,000	1,200,000	970,000	230,000	1,589,000
1931-1941	10,377,000	149,000	241,000	-92,000	1,130,000
1941-1951	11,507,000	548,000	379,000	169,000	2,141,000
1951-1961	13,648,000	1,543,000	463,000	1,080,000	4,590,000
1961-1971	18,238,000	1,429,000	707,000	722,000	3,330,000
1971-1981	21,568,000	1,824,000	873,000	951,000	3,252,000
1981-1991	24,820,000	1,866,000	640,000	1,226,000	3,211,000
1991-1996	28,031,000	1,170,000	480,000	690,000	1,641,000

SOURCE: Statistics Canada and Citizenship and Immigration Canada

FIGURE 4: Gross Immigration and Citizenships Granted *(Annual Figures, 1920-1997)*



SOURCE: Canadian Multiculturalism and Citizenship and Immigration Canada

6) While immigration is a shared federal-provincial jurisdiction under Section 95 of the Constitution, it is only recently that the provinces have begun to take up a role in immigration policy. Prior to the 1960s, the provinces saw immigration as a legislative jurisdiction rife with danger and few rewards. As such, the provinces were generally content to leave matters up to Ottawa *(Dirks, 1995)*. It is only recently that the provinces have begun to take more than a passing interest in immigration policy. Following WWII, Ontario became the first to show interest in this area, a logical step for the province that consistently becomes home for the majority of Canada's immigrants. Quebec, primarily concerned with attracting as many francophone immigrants as possible, quickly followed suit and sought to ensure that immigrants were integrated into the francophone community, and that Ottawa's policies complemented provincial social and economic priorities *(Dirks, 1985)*. Quebec established its own Department of Immigration in 1968.

Since 1978, Ottawa and the provinces have sought to integrate policy development and implementation through the signing of intergovernmental agreements. The most comprehensive of these was signed with Quebec in 1991. In total, six provinces have signed immigration agreements with the federal government.

7) While various Immigration Acts have been passed in Canada, immigration policy has always tended to be conducted on a relatively ad hoc basis. Federal Ministers of Immigration have tended to exercise very wide discretionary powers to change the intent and direction of policy by modifying immigration regulations rather than the Act itself. It is the Minister who sets immigration objectives and levels, and changes the regulations, rules, and criteria affecting applications. In the past, Ministers have been quite free to set practical policy to the point of even turning it on its head *(Troper, 1997)*. While the passage of the 1976 Immigration Act did remove some of the discretionary powers of the Minister and immigration officials, the fact remains that the Immigration Minister still exercises a number of significant controls over immigration policy.

In addition, it is only recently that immigration, as a segment of public policy, has achieved a relatively high profile and a separate departmental home. For most of Canada's history, immigration has been combined with other government responsibilities depending on the current objectives of immigration policy ***(see Box 2, page 7)***. All of this is underscored by the fact that Canada has had only three Immigration Acts – one in 1906, another in 1952, and the last one in 1976.

BOX 2: Immigration Acts & Departments

From 1867 to the mid-1890s, immigration was attached to the Department of Agriculture, an appropriate home given that the early purpose of immigration was to encourage the settlement of farmers to increase agricultural exports. From then until 1919, immigration became the responsibility of the powerful Minister of the Interior, Clifford Sifton and later, his successor, Frank Oliver. Again, this was a logical home since immigration was one of the most important public policy efforts of the Laurier government. In 1906, Oliver shepherded through Parliament Canada's first Immigration Act. From 1919 to 1936, immigration was moved to the Department of Immigration and Colonization. From 1936 to 1949, it was housed in the Department of Mines and Resources, reflecting the fact that immigration was expanding to include labourers for Canada's resource and manufacturing sectors which had grown considerably during WWI and WWII. In 1950, immigration came into its own when the Department of Citizenship and Immigration was created. In 1966, immigration was again moved. This time, it was joined with labour in the new Department of Manpower and Immigration. This reflected the close ties that immigration has always had with developing Canada's labour force. During this period, the current 1976 Immigration Act was also passed. Manpower and Immigration would later evolve into the Department of Employment and Immigration. In 1994, Bill C-35 was passed, and established the current Department of Citizenship and Immigration Canada.

SOURCE: *Controversy and Compromise*, Gerald Dirks, 1995

Despite the many changes in the objectives, purposes, and implementation of specific immigration policies over time, the Acts themselves were rarely amended. Drafting major immigration legislation has always been a tough assignment – it is an emotional policy area that some feel has a corrosive effect on national unity. Hence, most governments have been inclined to take the easier approach by modifying regulations and procedures through "Orders in Council" *(Dirks, 1995)*. In other words, developments in immigration policy have typically occurred in changing the regulations accompanying the various Immigration Acts. With this in mind, legislation provides only a partial window on Canadian immigration policy. To better understand the history of immigration in Canada, it would be more beneficial to examine what really happened in the various immigration "eras."

EIGHT ERAS OF IMMIGRATION

1. The Early Years: 1500-1800:

Early exploration in Canada started with the Italian explorer John Cabot who landed in the Maritimes in 1497, and was followed by Jacques Cartier who landed in the Gulf of St. Lawrence in 1534. While both attempted to establish settlements, these first efforts at "immigration" were doomed to failure because of the climate, disease, and other hardships. Exploration did continue, however, financed by a growing fur trade. Eventually, Samuel Champlain was able to found the first permanent settlement in 1608 at Quebec City.

During these early years, European administrations did not see settlement as a priority, nor was emigration from Europe particularly popular. In addition, North American explorers and fur traders feared immigration – more settlers would mean increased competition and interference with the lucrative fur trade *(Troper, 1985)*. This view would eventually change, however, as colonial authorities began to see settlement as a way to guarantee sovereignty of colonial land claims. As such, the first official immigration program was launched in 1627 when the French Monarch granted the Company of One Hundred Associates a monopoly on the fur trade if they agreed to bring in 100 settlers per year *(Canadian Almanac, 1998)*. Although many would eventually return to France, agricultural settlements did begin to grow. Meanwhile, the English had begun settling in the Maritimes.

By the first ever "census" taken in 1666, there were 3,215 European settlers in Canada, and by the time English-French rivalry for North America was settled in 1759, the population of New France alone stood at some 64,000 *(Canadian Almanac, 1998)*. The first real wave of immigration to hit Canada occurred in 1784, when some 40,000 United Empire Loyalists fled the United States after the defeat of the British in the American Revolution. The group essentially amounted to Canada's first set of self-identified refugees *(Head, 2000)*. Some 30,000 settled in Nova Scotia, resulting in the creation of the colony of New Brunswick, and another 10,000 settled in Quebec, resulting in the division of Quebec into Upper and Lower Canada in 1791. The migration was highly significant, and increased the population of Canada immensely. It was not completely uncontrolled and unassisted, as imperial authorities helped with supplies and organizing the distribution of land among the new immigrants *(Troper, 1985)*.

2. Establishing Canada: 1800-1867

For the 70 years prior to Confederation, immigration policy was marked by several characteristics. First, the unrestricted, and the administration of immigration policy was limited to concerns such as quarantine stations, and ensuring that "undesirable elements" such as criminals, paupers, the diseased and the destitute did not gain entry *(Dirks, 1985)*. Second, while there was some officially encouraged immigration from Britain, America and Scotland, immigration was not aggressively pursued as a matter of public policy. Throughout much of the 1800s, the colonies – especially Upper Canada – suffered from rather slow and erratic economic growth which limited opportunities for wide-scale immigration *(Troper, 1985)*.

When immigration did occur, it was largely restricted to British expatriots, and even then, they were just as likely to move on to the United States as to stay in Canada. Further, the handover of New France to Britain after the events of 1759 meant that immigration from France had for all intents and purposes come to an end. In short, the flow of immigrants was relatively slow during the first part of the 1800s. While the French had decades, English immigration tended to occur in smaller numbers and over an extended period of time. Immigration was restricted to those who were generally of the same British stock of those already settled in Upper Canada *(Troper, 1985)* and while they would slowly fill the better agricultural land, the numbers from a census in 1825 tell the story – the population of Lower Canada stood at 480,000 while that of Upper Canada was only 160,000 *(Economic Council, 1991)*.

1848 was a pivotal year, witnessing Canada's second big wave of immigrants, this time the tens of thousands fleeing the Irish potato famine, and thousands more the rebellions and wars taking place in different places across Europe. This would usher in major social and economic changes. First, many of the Irish, given their recent experience, were not inclined to pick up agriculture as a livelihood and would thus settle in established urban areas where they formed a conspicuous minority. The Irish – blue collar and Roman Catholic – did not fit the "mold" of the traditional British immigrant and were often marginalized in economic and social life. At the same time, the Irish served as a critical source of labour to advance the construction of railways and other commerce and industry. Those who did not settle in the cities often went to work in the lumber camps, the docks, and the railway camps *(Troper, 1985)*.

By 1850, the colonies had experienced more immigration than in the first quarter of the century. The French population now stood at 840,000 (most of this being a natural increase) and the English population at 790,000 *(Economic Council, 1991)*. Immigration was starting to change the face of Canada.

3. A New Nation: 1867-1895

In the early post-Confederation era, Canadian immigration programs continued to be relatively unsophisticated and were primarily limited to seeking farmers to develop new agricultural lands and grow various commodities to increase Canadian exports. Immigrant labour was also perceived as important for infant industries such as forestry and mining, key components of the economy that needed to mature and become increasingly competitive *(Dirks, 1995)*.

At the same time, the end of the Civil War brought renewed economic growth and interest in the United States, causing immigration in Canada to languish. Despite significant Canadian investment in railways (ongoing since 1836 with the completion of Canada's first railroad, the Champlain-St. Lawrence), the flow of immigrants was slow. While other countries such as the U.S. were offering free passage, a grant of land, agricultural implements, and loans for homesteads, Canadian land was being held by speculators and the government offered little financial assistance to immigrants. The result was predictable in that Canadian emigration exceeded the rate of immigration in every decade from 1867 to the turn of the century *(Economic Council, 1991)*.

Nevertheless, immigration was an ongoing concern. The new Dominion was busy building railway links across the provinces, and British Columbia had agreed to join Confederation in 1871 on the promise of a transcontinental railway – a massive undertaking for the

young country. As a result, Canada began to actively participate in the trans-Atlantic labour market, which was becoming more accessible by the expansion of ocean travel and railway links. Skilled British artisans were in high demand, and while the Canadian government officially stated that only agricultural immigrants were being sought, many who came from 1880 onwards were unskilled industrial labourers *(Avery, 1985)*.

The 1871 census, the first to be conducted after Confederation, revealed a total population of 3.5 million. The French were the largest single ethnic group at just over one million, followed by the Irish at 846,000, the English at 706,000, and the Scots at 550,000. There were also 202,000 Germans, 29,000 Dutch, and 21,000 African-Americans, largely those who had escaped the vagaries of slavery through the "underground railroad." There were only 63,000 other nationalities, largely from Southern and Eastern Europe *(Agnew, 1967)*.

A key part of Canada's immigration history would also unfold in this period. On February 15, 1881, the Canadian Pacific Railroad (CPR) was incorporated to construct and operate the transcontinental railway. Thousands of labourers were needed, and the federal government allowed the CPR to bring in immigrant labour. CPR contractors travelled to Europe, the United States, and China seeking immigrants. British, American, and continental Europeans were employed to push the line westward, while contractors travelled to Kwangtung province in southern China to bring in 17,000 Chinese "coolies" for the dangerous and oftentimes deadly task of pushing the line eastward through the Rockies. Many of the Chinese immigrants intended to stay for only a short while to earn some income and then return home *(Avery 1985 and Agnew, 1967)*.

After four years, the CPR was completed. However, many of the Chinese labourers did not return home. The British Columbia government, fearing a tidal wave of Chinese immigrants to join those already landed, then took the step of enacting the first officially restrictive immigrant law in Canada by imposing a "Chinese head tax" in 1885. The Act was disallowed by the federal government, but under pressure from the province, it was re-enacted at the federal level and set at $50 per every Chinese person entering the country. In 1899, the tax was increased to $100, and to $500 in 1903 *(Dirks, 1985 and Head, 2000)*. The issue of Asian immigrants would continue to fester in British Columbia, sometimes spilling over into race riots such as those that occurred in 1887 and 1907 *(Head, 2000)*.

The construction of the new railway would eventually open Canada's great Northwest to settlement, but there was no immediate flood of immigrants. During this time, some of the first groups fleeing religious intolerance immigrated, including a group of 6,000 Mennonites who signed an agreement with Ottawa for eight townships of land in southern Manitoba near Steinbach, and a small group of 40 Mormons from Utah who settled in Cardston, Alberta in 1887. In the 1880s, Canada also received thousands of Jewish refugees fleeing pogroms in Poland and Russia, some of whom eventually settled in the West, or in Toronto and Montreal. These first religious refugees were followed in 1899 by a group of 7,000 Doukhobors who settled in Saskatchewan and later British Columbia *(Agnew, 1967)*.

4. The Tidal Wave: 1896-1914

The turn of the century saw a new era in Canadian immigration, stemming from a number of factors. First, by the mid-1890s, Canada had made significant national investments that could accommodate a large influx of immigrants. The completion of the CPR and other railways had quadrupled the lines of track from 3,000 miles in 1867 to over 15,000 *(Economic Council, 1991)*. Second, economic conditions were increasingly favourable. Macdonald's "national policy" and preferential import tariffs had benefitted Eastern Canadian manufacturers, whose output had doubled since 1867, and who were now eagerly looking to increase both domestic and international exports. The world economy was in an upswing, and the government came under intense pressure from business and railroad interests for more immigrant workers to satisfy what seemed to be an almost insatiable demand for Canadian resources *(Troper, 1985)*.

Most important, the world economy was seeing an increased demand for hard wheat – the kind that could be grown on the Canadian prairies *(Troper, 1985)*. With wheat prices climbing, it became amply clear that Canada could stand to profit from expanded wheat production, and with much of the farmland in the United States already settled, the Canadian West was wide open *(Economic Council, 1991)*.

The favourable conditions led the newly elected Laurier government to conclude that now was the time to settle the West. Laurier's Minister of the Interior, Clifford Sifton, developed a large-scale immigration plan to secure farmers who could grow wheat for export and also provide a domestic market for Eastern manufacturing products. However, Sifton also feared that the immigration plan could attract non-English "types" of immigrants. Because an ethnically diverse Canada ran counter to prevailing social values, Sifton coupled his immigration policy with new elements of restriction. The Chinese "head-tax" was the first foray into this new policy, but it would soon be buttressed with other restrictions against all non-whites *(Economic Council, 1991)*.

As part of its policy, the government established a priority list of "preferred" immigrants, and at the top were experienced British and American farmers, followed by those from Northern Europe. Immigrants from Eastern and Southern Europe were less desirable, and "coloureds" were not at all desirable. In short, the government established a hierarchy of immigrants starting with the British and Americans, followed by the French, Belgians, Dutch, Scandinavians (Swedes, Norwegians, and Finns), Russians, Austro-Hungarians, Germans, Ukrainians and Poles. At the bottom were Italians, Southern Slavic peoples, Greeks, and Syrians. Jewish immigrants, Asians, Gypsies, and African-Americans were to be denied entry *(Troper, 1985)*.

Specific examples of the new restrictive immigration policy included a law passed in British Columbia to prevent Chinese immigrants from acquiring any Crown Lands *(CIC Website, 2000)*. In 1906, the country's first Immigration Law was also passed, and it greatly enhanced the powers of immigration officers to reject "undesirable elements" (*Economic Council, 1991)*. This national legislation was followed up with other amendments and Orders in Council such as "continuous passage" legislation in 1908 that made it very difficult for certain immigrants such as East Indians to land in Canada, and a set of additional amendments in 1910 that further restricted "undesirable" immigrants *(Economic Council, 1991)*. A combination of landing taxes, bilateral restriction agreements, and conditional travel arrangements prohibited the influx of "undesirables." The settlement of female Asians was almost always refused as this might encourage Asian males to settle permanently *(Troper, 1985)*.

The attempts of the government to land "preferred" immigrants could only go so far. First, the legislation could not be altered to cover every eventuality. For example, in 1910, rumours were circulating that a large contingent of African-Americans were looking to immigrate from the United States. Since there was nothing in the Immigration Act preventing such immigrants, government officials scrambled to tell their officers to deny them on health reasons. But more importantly, the high demand for immigrants forced Canadian immigration policy to bow to economic necessity. Despite the government's wishes, immigrants from Southern and Eastern Europe had to be courted if the objective was to be met. *(Troper, 1985)*. As such, arrangements were made with shipping companies to obtain immigrants from as many countries as possible. The companies were paid a set sum for each farmer or domestic settled in Canada *(Agnew, 1967)* and the government actively promoted the opportunities in the Canadian West by offering clear title to 160 acres of free land and the billing of the West as "The Land of Opportunity" and the "Last Best West" *(Economic Council, 1991)*.

From the point of view of the government, the effort must have been deemed a great success – between 1910 and 1914 over 1.6 million immigrants had landed in Canada. Of that number, 1.2 million had come from Britain and the United States, the two top sources desired by the government. A further 440,00 had also arrived from other sources *(Agnew, 1967)* and between 1890 and 1910, Canadian wheat production had more than tripled *(Economic Council, 1991)*.

5. The War Years: 1914-1945

The outbreak of WWI in 1914 brought the government's immigration program to an abrupt halt with the numbers falling to only 10% of what they were in 1913. After the war, however, strong overseas demand for Canadian agricultural products and a labour shortage in Canada's growing industrial sector revived some of the immigration momentum *(Economic Council, 1991)*. While the immigration environment had certainly

changed, the government's essential policies did not. In 1923, the government passed the Chinese Exclusion Act which further restricted Asian immigration – only 15 Chinese would immigrate between 1923 and 1941 *(Agnew, 1967)*. Additional change to the 1910 amendments formally entrenched exclusion of certain races that were before only discriminated against informally *(Economic Council, 1991)*.

With the onset of the Great Depression in 1929, the government implemented the "tap-on-tap-off" approach to immigration by slamming the door shut. In August of 1930, an Order-in-Council was passed that restricted immigrants to wives and children of families already established in Canada, and farmers with sufficient capital to start farming at once *(Agnew, 1967)*. The Chinese Exclusion Act was also tightened *(CIC Website, 2000)*. In March of 1931, another Order-in-Council was passed prohibiting the entry of any immigrants unless they could prove British or American citizenship and had sufficient means to employ themselves. Earlier exceptions that might have been granted to some Asian immigrants were revoked, including the wives and children of those already in Canada. Emigration increased while immigration slowed to a trickle. It would not recover until after 1945 *(Economic Council, 1991)*.

6. Post-War Canada: 1945-1962

The Second World War had a tremendous impact on the Canadian economy, boosting industrial output by 70% and productivity by 30% *(Economic Council, 1991)*. While the prevailing opinion was that the economic boom generated by the war would not last, the reality was that demand for Canadian products soared as the Marshall plan pumped billions into the reconstruction of post-war Europe. By 1946, an acute shortage of labour was making itself felt in agriculture, mining and forestry, and business lobbied Ottawa for a relaxation of the tight immigration restrictions handed down during the Depression *(Troper, 1997)*. In 1947, the government reviewed its pre-war immigration policy and decided to widen sponsorship privileges, expand the range of admissible occupations, and grant "preferred" country status to a host of European nations *(Economic Council, 1991)*. The result was a renewed wave of immigration, largely revolving around highly educated and skilled immigrants from "preferred" countries such as Holland, Britain, and Germany, and unskilled labourers from Southern and Eastern Europe *(Avery, 1985)*.

Along with the greatly increased immigrant flow, the government decided in 1952 to overhaul the old 1906 Immigration Act. The new Act was designed to do several things. First, it intended to attract a consistent flow of immigrants without casting too wide a net, thus reiterating the government's commitment to seek immigrants that would not drastically alter current Canadian ethnic or social demographics. Second, the legislation affirmed what had always been an unofficial government policy, in that it allowed the Minister and immigration officials wide powers to set regulations as they saw fit, and gave the Minister wide powers to reject immigrants based on nationality, origins, or even custom. However, the Act itself would not really determine the future of immigration in this period *(Troper, 1997)*. Rather, the high demand for labour would circumvent the government's preferences.

Immigration flows were not at all insignificant, but they simply were not large enough to satisfy the demand for labour. The source countries for Canadian immigration desperately wanted to retain their skilled labour and stem the flow of emigration. Currency regulations were put in place by numerous European countries and transportation tariffs were also imposed *(Troper, 1997)*. The Canadian government responded by negotiating special bilateral agreements and providing interest free loans to cover the costs of travel if an immigrant's skills were in high demand, but the shortages persisted *(Troper, 1997)*. Business continued to urge government to cast a wider net by actively soliciting the immigration of the war's "displaced persons" or DPs.

The government initially balked at the suggestion, but convinced that the economic boom was dependent on securing adequate labour, gave in and began processing applicants in Europe's DP camps *(Troper, 1997)*. Between 1947 and 1952, over 186,000 displaced persons entered the country *(CIC Website, 2000)*, many without being screened or pre-selected for economic potential or occupation *(Agnew, 1967)*. This wave of displaced persons essentially marked the beginning of Canada's refugee policy as a separate stream from "regular" immigrants *(CIC Website, 2000)*.

Official government policy at the time remained committed to finding those immigrants who would best mirror current Canadian society – Western Europeans.

While immigration was deemed important for continued prosperity, the government made it clear that the intent of the policy was not to change the social composition of the country. But the demand for labour kept increasing. With shortages in the United States, Australia and elsewhere, Canada soon found itself competing for a shrinking pool of immigrants *(Troper, 1991)*. What was more, prosperity also returned to Northern and Western Europe, and the traditional pool of "preferred" immigrants was beginning to dry up. As a result, candidates who might have been previously rejected became valued prospects, and barriers soon started to slip away. In 1948, the Chinese Exclusion Act was repealed and immigrants from Italy and other areas of Southern Europe became more important. Immigration offices were opened in Italy, and by the mid-1960s, Italian immigration climbed into the hundreds of thousands *(Troper, 1997)*.

In 1957, the Diefenbaker government took power, and immigration policy began to show subtle signs of shifting. The immediate post-war focus was to find those who could fill a variety of unskilled occupations, but it soon became clear that the emerging modern economy demanded higher skilled and technical professionals. The government, in short, was being pushed into a corner: Canada needed expertise and it could not be found by drawing on the domestic labour supply or traditional sources of immigrants in Britain and other European countries. The country of origin would become less and less important by the early 1960s *(Economic Council, 1991)*.

7. A New Era: 1962-1990

With the 1950s boom giving way to a slower paced economy in the 1960s, the government turned its attention towards policy revision *(Troper, 1997)*. Major changes were in the works. In 1962, the Diefenbaker government started the process by introducing a new set of immigration regulations designed to remove traces of racial discrimination and to attract more professionals from a wider range of countries *(Economic Council, 1991)*. These changes were followed by an official "White Paper" in 1966 that sought a solution to the growing problem of illegal immigrants and the need to restructure the system to match a slower economy. Proposals to tighten up family re-unification immigrants were strongly opposed, and the government set aside the proposed changes and again resorted to tinkering with the regulations. Family migration was restructured but not curtailed, and this class of immigrant would continue expanding, becoming the largest single group of immigrants *(Troper, 1997)*.

1967 marked the beginning of the biggest changes to affect Canadian immigration policy in over 100 years. First, the Pearson government introduced new regulations to the 1952 Act that created the Immigration Appeal Board to improve the process of dealing with appeals from rejected applicants *(Dirks, 1985 and 1995)*. Second, the regulations implemented a new "points" system to rate immigrants applying outside of the family class based on a variety of skills and talents such as education, occupational status, and age. With the points system, racial and ethnic discrimination was expunged, family reunification was restructured, and Ottawa overhauled the procedures by which independent immigrants were to be admitted *(Troper, 1997)*. As ***Figure 5 (page 13)*** demonstrates, this change in policy, combined with a reduced incentive for immigrants to leave an economically prosperous Europe, would have a dramatic impact on the sources of immigration into Canada and the resulting ethnic composition of the country.

The main objectives of the point system was to admit people who fit the perceived needs of the labour market under a universally applied process without reference to race or ethnicity *(Economic Council, 1991)*. Further, it would allow the government to respond quickly to new priorities by changing the way points were allocated *(Troper, 1997)*. At the time, immigrants could obtain a maximum of 100 points – up to 30 for short-term factors such as pre-arranged employment, a needed occupation, knowledge of French or English, having a relative in Canada, and place of destination. Up to 70 points could be awarded for long-term factors such as educational attainment, training, personal assessment, and age *(Economic Council, 1991)*.

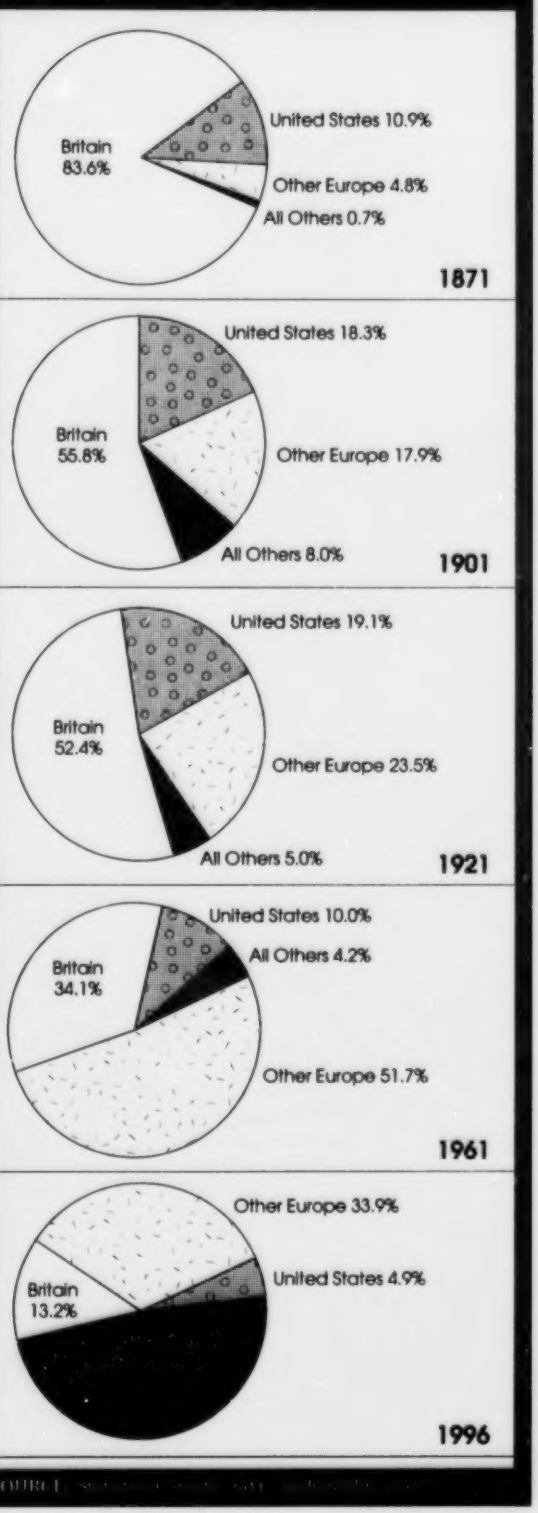
Throughout the 1960s and 1970s, pressures continued to build. First, the UN Convention on the Status of Refugees was signed in 1969. Because the federal government had always viewed refugees as an "exception" and dealt with them on an ad hoc basis, the new environment forced the government to explore ways to meet new international commitments *(Troper, 1997)*.

Second, improved transportation, a tightening of U.S. immigration laws, and a growing recognition of Canada as a land of opportunity was turning the country into a magnet for immigrants, especially those from less developed countries. By the late 1970s, more non-Europeans were entering Canada than Europeans *(Troper, 1985)*. Third, loopholes in the existing legislation were creating problems. For example, visitors to Canada were applying for landed immigrant status within the country, where they were able to appeal a negative decision to the Immigration Appeal Board. This created a serious backlog. Illegal immigration also continued, and was reaching "critical" proportions. In May of 1973, some 17,000 "visitors" were awaiting a hearing – a backlog that could take 14 years to sort out. In August, the government introduced a bill in the Commons providing a 60 day amnesty for all those who wanted to become legal immigrants. By the end of the "Adjustment Status Program" in October, almost 40,000 people from 150 countries had obtained landed immigrant status *(Economic Council, 1991)*.

These pressures made it apparent that tinkering with the regulations would no longer be sufficient *(Dirks, 1995)*. The 1952 Act, designed to attract unskilled labour, was completely at odds with one of the world's most urban and mechanized Western states. Canada needed skilled and capital-productive immigrants *(Troper, 1997)*. As such, the government looked to develop a totally new Immigration Act. A Green Paper was tabled in Parliament in February of 1975. The paper pondered the future of Canada's population and slowing rate of natural growth, and concluded that the number of immigrants would have to become the main determinant of eventual population size *(Economic Council, 1991)*. A Special Joint Committee of the Senate and Commons was then struck in March to tour the country and solicit public input into immigration policy for the first time *(Dirks, 1995)*. The committee's report would become the basis for new legislation introduced in 1976, passed in 1977, and taking effect in 1978. The new Act served as a departure from past policy in a number of ways.

1) For the first time in Canada's history, the specific objectives of Canadian immigration policy were established in statute. The Act set out three basic social, humanitarian, and economic goals for immigration *(Dirks, 1985)*. First, it would facilitate the reunion in Canada of Canadian residents with close family members from abroad. Second, it fulfilled Canada's legal obligations

FIGURE 5: Birth Country of Foreign-Born Canadians' 1871 to 1996



SOURCE:

with respect to refugees. Finally, immigration was to foster the development of a strong and viable economy and promote programs to satisfy key social, demographic and cultural goals *(CIC Handbook, 1999)*.

2) To achieve these objectives, the new Act created three specific categories of immigrants. First priority would belong to family re-unification applicants who could be sponsored by close family members already living in Canada. Second, a separate category of refugees was established, including official UN Convention refugees and others in "refugee-like" situations. The costs for these immigrants would be covered by the government, and provisions were made to allow private groups to sponsor refugees. Third, a separate class of "independent" immigrants who qualified for certain types of jobs or possessed other economic assets important to Canada was established. Unlike the first two classes of immigrants, independent applicants would be assessed strictly on the points system, which was also modified to give less emphasis on educational attainment and more on occupational experience *(Economic Council, 1991)*.

3) For the first time, Canada would begin working with a quota system *(Troper, 1997)*. In consultation with the provinces, Ottawa would set an annual target for the number of immigrants allowed entry into each of the categories. The target levels of immigration would also be integrated with current Canadian demographic and labour *(Economic Council, 1991)* essentially entrenching the "tap-on-tap-off" approach.

4) The Act gave the Immigration Appeal Board the final authority as a fully independent body whose decisions could not be over-ruled by the government except in cases where security emerged as an issue *(Dirks, 1985)*.

The new Act constituted the most liberalized immigration policy the country had ever seen by emphasizing as priorities the reunification of families and the humanitarian consideration of refugees. Since the Act was passed, however, major modifications to the regulations have been required *(Dirks, 1995)*.

A variety of events in the late 1970s and early 1980s put the new Act to the test. One of the most significant events occurred in 1979 when over 60,000 Vietnamese and Cambodian "boat people" swelled Canada's immigration rolls *(Troper, 1997)*, bringing the number of refugees as a percent of all immigrants to about 25% compared to 10% in past years *(Dirks, 1985)*. In fact, Canadians absorbed a higher number of these refugees per capita than any other nation *(Troper, 1997)*.

At the same time, the province of Quebec increasingly took an interest in immigration to facilitate its own economic and social priorities. In 1978, the Cullen-Couture Agreement was signed, ensuring greater federal-provincial cooperation on immigration policy affecting Quebec. A joint committee was established between Ottawa and Quebec to harmonize objectives, and immigrants destined for Quebec would need to secure approval from both governments *(Economic Council, 1991)*. This original agreement was later followed by others that would gradually increase Quebec's influence on immigration matters, culminating in a comprehensive agreement in 1991 that provided Quebec with exclusive responsibility for the selection of independent class immigrants destined for that province *(CIC Website, 2000)*.

The early 1980s brought the onset of one of the worst recessions to hit Canada since the Great Depression. As in the past, the government curtailed immigration by lowering quotas and adjusting other regulations. For example, in May 1982, the entry of independent immigrants was virtually prohibited unless applicants had pre-arranged employment *(Economic Council, 1991)*. This change would not be lifted until 1986. The number of immigrants dropped from a high of about 190,000 in 1975 to less than 90,000 by 1983.

In 1985, the Immigration Minister again focused the country's attention on immigration issues by providing a special report to Parliament. That report, backed up by a another report from the Standing Committee on Labour, Employment and Immigration, argued that policy needed to smooth out the aging population of the country – that policy should be tied not only to short-term labour market requirements but also to the longer-term issue of a declining fertility rate *(Economic Council, 1991)*.

In 1985, the Supreme Court also handed down a landmark ruling on the status of refugees that would continue to impact immigration policy throughout the 1980s and into the 1990s. The Court ruled that once in Canada, refugees were entitled to protection under the Charter of Right and Freedoms *(Troper, 1997)*. As the 1980s wore on, the immigration system continually came

under pressure from migrants claiming refugee status as a way to gain entry and bypass the points system. In addition, the country started experiencing a growing problem with refugees being dropped off Canada's shore. Once landed on Canadian soil, the refugees could make full use of the appeal process, which became clogged. Government responded by passing Bills C-55 and C-84, the former streamlining the determination of valid refugee claims, and the latter imposing penalties on anyone aiding illegal entry into Canada to make a refugee claim *(Economic Council, 1991)*.

8. Changing the Rules: 1990-2000

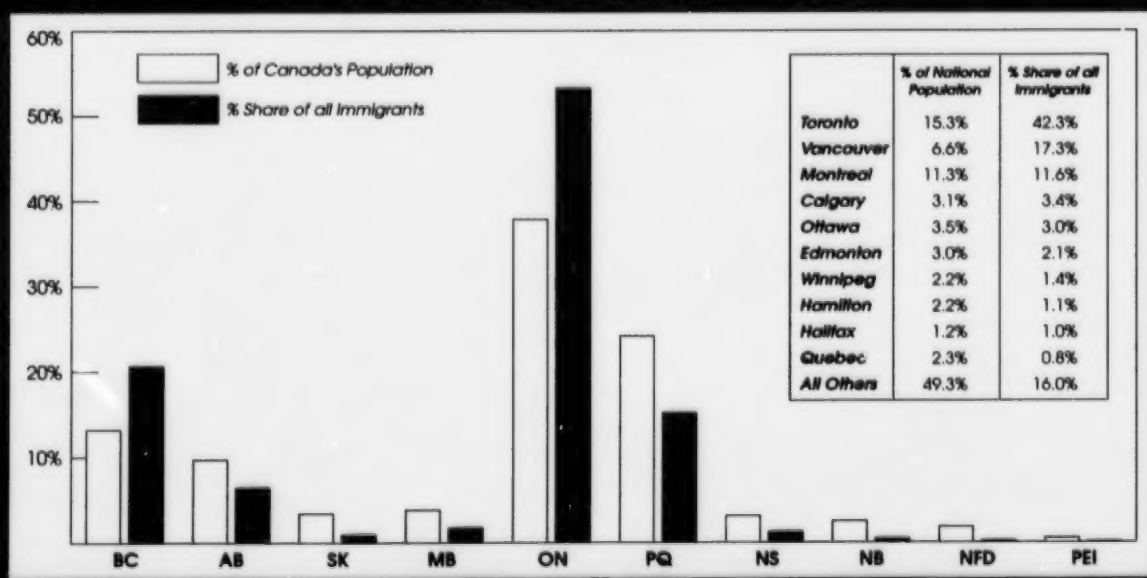
A second economic slump in 1990 precipitated another debate over the future of immigration, and saw the government introduce amendments to the Immigration Act to stem the flow of refugees and family class applicants while allowing easier access for independent applicants, especially those with significant capital to invest. While pro-refugee interests opposed the proposals and forced the government to soften the legislation, amendments were nonetheless passed in December 1992 *(Troper, 1997)*. The changes included reduced powers of appeal, more power for immigration officers to refuse prospective refugees, and a streamlined system for deporting unsuccessful claimants and those who commit crimes *(Gold, 1992)*.

Following the recession, Ottawa began to reconsider the immigration program. First, a ten month public consultation was launched in 1994 to gain citizen input on the future of immigration and the quota levels to be established for 1995-2000. Second, the government reallocated the priority given to the different classes of immigrants. In 1994, the family reunification class accounted for 51% of all immigrants and the independent class 43%, with refugees making up the remainder. Throughout the 1990s, the plan was to shift the balance towards the independent class, which would eventually comprise 53% of all immigrants by the year 2000 *(CIC Website, 2000)*.

Third, a Legislative Review Advisory Group was established in 1996 to examine potential changes to the Immigration Act. A Green Paper entitled "Not Just Numbers" was made public in January 1998. A year later, the Minister announced new directions for immigration policy to be developed into new policies and legislation.

Finally, the 1990s were marked by a renewed interest in co-operating with the provinces in administering immigration policy. In 1998, intergovernmental agreements on immigration were signed with Saskatchewan, Manitoba, and British Columbia. These agreements were followed by others signed with New Brunswick and Newfoundland in 1999.

FIGURE 6: Destination of New Immigrants on Arrival



	% of National Population	% Share of all Immigrants
Toronto	15.3%	42.3%
Vancouver	6.6%	17.3%
Montreal	11.3%	11.6%
Calgary	3.1%	3.4%
Ottawa	3.5%	3.0%
Edmonton	3.0%	2.1%
Winnipeg	2.2%	1.4%
Hamilton	2.2%	1.1%
Halifax	1.2%	1.0%
Quebec	2.3%	0.8%
All Others	49.3%	16.0%

SOURCE:

FUTURE CHALLENGES

Despite significant changes in policy over the last few years, the topic of immigration continues to draw attention. The discussion tends to centre around concerns with current policy and recent international developments. A brief review of recent works by immigration experts yields several areas of concern:

1) There is an ongoing concern that the policy changes implemented since the 1970s have focused too heavily on the family reunification class as opposed to the independent class. While the government has recently responded by signalling a move to tilt the balance toward independent immigrants, the question of balance between classes clearly remains an issue *(Globerman, 1992 and DeVoretz, 1995)*.

2) Canada's broad approach to immigration – the "tap-on-tap-off" approach – has been criticized by some as making long-range planning difficult *(Marr, 1992)* and even having perverse effects during times of economic recession. Because it is the economically unscreened who continue to immigrate during a recession, unskilled labour is entering an already weakened labour market *(DeVoretz, 1995)*.

3) Concerns have clearly been expressed over the regional impacts of immigration *(DeVoretz, 1995)*. First, a concentration of immigrants in one city or region tends to cut a path for later immigrants *(Beaujot, 1992)*. As such, immigrants tend to locate in a few key areas regardless of whether their specific skills are required in that location *(DeVoretz, 1995)*. The effects of this concern are illustrated by ***Figure 6 (page 15)*** which shows that most provinces – Ontario and British Columbia excepted – receive fewer immigrants than the size of their provincial population would warrant. In fact, there is such an imbalance that almost 60% of immigrants land in the cities of Toronto and Vancouver alone, even though those two cities comprise only 22% of Canada's population.

4) There is a growing recognition that the broad "tap-on and tap-off" approach may also ignore regional labour requirements. In other words, annual targets based on the prevailing national circumstance may be too simplistic to accommodate specific regional needs. More regionally-sensitive methods may be required *(DeVoretz, 1995)*.

5) Changing international conditions will likely increase competition for highly skilled immigrants *(Globerman, 1992 and Green, 1995)*. As a result, Canadians will have to give serious consideration to reassessing other government policies, such as taxation, if it is to remain internationally competitive in drawing highly skilled immigrants.

6) Massive immigration to compensate for a low domestic birth rate may cause unforseen complications. When domestic population growth is slow, rapid immigration may be more difficult to accommodate, causing stress on public institutions and making the integration of newcomers more challenging *(Beaujot, 1992)*.

7) Finally, estimates suggest that 70 to 80 million people may be currently looking to emigrate to new countries, but only 15 million may be legitimate refugees *(Dirks, 1995)*. Thus, screening processes could very well come under increased pressure in the future.

CONCLUSION

Immigration policy has certainly undergone significant alterations throughout Canada's history, and it will continue to be impacted by changing economic, social, and international circumstances. Accommodating these circumstances to specific national, regional and provincial objectives will remain the key challenge facing policy makers in the future. As such, it is highly unlikely for immigration policy to fall off the government agenda any time soon.

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